

STATINTL

A New McCarthy Period On A Global Front?

Censorship: The New Frontier In The Cold

(From The Christian Century)

Spoken by President Kennedy administration began struck so a note as his appeal to the press use of its constitutional free interest of national security.

deal demonstrated too little faith in part in the strength of truth great confidence in the capacity of of democracy to win by use of the

as it did immediately after the asco, his appeal carried an over-panic which was not justified by erious as it was. And the ap- be justified on the basis of the n which a free and open society t. Such a maneuver seems curi- sistent with other actions of the such as his recent commendable t office censorship of mail munist countries.

k to Justice Holmes, Mr. the doctrine of "clear and " as justifying limitations on eech. "The danger has never ar and its presence has never nminent," said the President.

at the courts have held in times d present danger" that "even ed rights of the First amend- yld to the public's need for curity," he called on the press self to publication of "facts the erves to know."

Several things need to be said about the President's exhortation. First, the paternalism of the phrase "facts the public deserves to know" is shocking. Does not the public deserve to know everything that bears on its freedom and responsibility, on its civic duties, on its obligations to country and world? Of course it does!

Second, conditions of actual war as implied in court decisions do not exist, and will not exist unless Congress declares war. He complained that the press had revealed "details of this nation's covert preparations to counter the enemy's covert preparations." It was in fact the duty of the press to reveal what was essentially an illegal enterprise, an enterprise violating American laws and treaties.

Should Not Complain

If President Kennedy is not ready to ask Congress to declare that a state of clear and present danger prevails, he should not complain when the press gives the American people the information it must have to form right judgments on events and actions, including judgments on the decisions and deeds of President Kennedy and the C.I.A. (What a serious mistake it would be for the President to appoint his brother, now the attorney general, to succeed Allen Dulles as C.I.A. head! Yet this is being discussed in the highest Administration circles, according to reports which may be trial balloons.)

The real ground for criticism of the press is that to too great an extent it did precisely what the President complains it did not do — it concealed from the Ameri-

can people the full scope of what was going on until it was too late for the public to bring its judgment to bear.

But, assume for the moment that the press were prepared to attempt the self-censorship the President asks. Who would be able to determine the rules of self-censorship? The President's admonition for editors to ask "Is it in the national interest?" as well as "Is it news?" does not solve the problem.

And if a way could be found to lay down the official line, how could the board of censors enforce voluntary compliance with its will? By definition the project is impossible.

After making his proposal, which is so impracticable that it may have been nothing more than an appeal for sympathy, the President seemed to glimpse the position he should have understood from the beginning. He said: "Perhaps there is no answer to the dilemma faced by a free and open society in a cold and secret war."

The only thing wrong with that sentence is the inclusion of the word "perhaps." Of course there is no answer to the dilemma.

The President and the nation's press are compelled to seize one horn or the other. We had better lay hold with both hands of those principles which are consistent with a free and open society.

They require us to tell the truth, to espouse and act for freedom, to leave no doubt that the morality which is identified with responsibility to God is of a different order from the morality whose highest